



INCLUDING THE EXCLUDED THROUGH LANGUAGE – SUPPORT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive language Education or non-discriminatory language is a language free from words, phrases or tones that reflect prejudiced, stereotyped or discriminatory views of particular groups. It means not only the inclusion of those with disabilities, but also of the enormous number of socially and economically disadvantaged children belonging to diverse social, cultural and linguistic groups. The objective is to create a uniform system of education that incorporates all children and youths.

Inclusive language education practices involve teachers and leadership team in order to formulate a vision in terms of learning outcome. First, general and specific objectives are established. Second, students are grouped according to chosen criteria. Third, changes in curriculum and pedagogy; and linguistic experts, language, general and special education teachers and counsellor work together to meet student's needs. In this way, language can play an important role in building an egalitarian society in which all are valued and feel included.

KEYWORDS: Inclusive language education.

Introduction

Equality as a fundamental right is guaranteed in India's Constitution. Accordingly, successive governments have tried to cope with educational and social inequalities. Despite achievements of half a century of affirmative action in higher education, legacies of discrimination, marginalisation and denial are still enmeshed in Indian social composition. "Inclusion" in education means removing the barriers in the classroom and school so that students of all ability levels are included in the same lesson. Equal access to education empowers people with disabilities to be independent and contributively, helpful members of an inclusive, barrier-free society. The Government of India Amendment 21A of the constitution, to give children between the ages of 6-14 the right to a free, appropriate and compulsory education, into an act. 25% of all seats in private schools are reserved for children belonging to economically weaker section i.e. marginalized sections of society. As more children with disabilities are being mainstreamed into general education settings, there is a need for teachers to be more educated in the field of special education. Inclusion is a term which expresses commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom he or she would otherwise attend if this student did not have special needs. It involves bringing the support services to the child, rather than moving the child to the services and requires only that the child will benefit from being in the class, rather than having to keep up with the other students. The purpose of this study will be focused on the perceptions and attitudes of school and support offered to teachers

Training teachers in teaching methods that include students of all ability levels, as well as spreading awareness to teachers about the importance and benefits of inclusion, is one of the most important parts of implementing a system of inclusive education, because the teachers are the people on-the-ground who are going to accommodate the students. Kalyanpur (2008) writes that there is inadequate policy dissemination around inclusion, and that many teachers know little about policies regarding students with disabilities. The World Bank claims that the attitudes of general educators or educators in a mainstream environment, towards students with disabilities are generally improving, probably as a result of the various policies and schemes of the 2000s. Teaching educators about the importance of inclusion and how to run an inclusive classroom is imperative for reaching the goal of education for all.

The purpose of this study are

- To pursue a study of relevant literature pertaining to importance support to educator's for implementation of inclusive education.
- To investigate whether there is sufficient support from the school administration towards Inclusive education needs of students.
- To formulate certain recommendations in order to assist educators in their successful implementation of language and inclusive education.

Our hypothesis that there is a support from school but it is not present in all scenarios and in some cases support is less. The areas where school support is extended to teachers as set forth by the researcher are:

1. A school policy to eliminate discriminatory attitudes towards socially and economically disadvantage children and children with special needs.

2. A school based support team to assist educators to deal with children of diverse groups and of diverse needs
3. An assessment team to evaluate language problems for special teaching methods
4. Sufficient funds for resources to facilitate effective teaching of students belonging to economically weaker section and children with special needs
5. Opportunities for networking between special educators ,mainstream educators, language educators, linguistic experts , counsellor and parents
6. Collaborative teaching with special educators , language educators, linguistic experts and counsellor is possible
7. Colleagues are approachable for assistance when needed to teach students coming from diverse cultural groups or students with special needs.
8. Administrators are approachable when faced with challenges presented by students coming from diverse cultural groups or students with special needs
9. In-service training opportunities for mainstream educators to better cope with students of diverse needs.
10. Encouraged by my administrators to attend conferences/workshops on teaching students with diverse backgrounds and of diverse needs.

Before conducting this study, research was needed in order to understand what previous studies have shown. Past research has shown that many teachers hold negative attitudes towards inclusion and do not believe that students benefit positively from inclusion.

To be effectively prepared for inclusive education, educators must be willing to change their:

- Attitudes;
- Beliefs;
- Opinions;
- Paradigms;
- Perspectives;
- Teaching methods; and
- Relationships.

According Schechtman and Or (1996) educators' need in-service training to empower them with the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies required to teach in an inclusive class. Inclusive programmes are most effective when shared leadership prevails. For meaningful improvements to occur, educators and principals must become change agents. The role of leadership and management is crucial in ensuring that the school goes the "route of inclusion," and is managed and "held together" in such a way that this is possible. Principals are in a critical position to influence the change process and contribute towards educators' preparedness for inclusive education. As instructional leaders, principals articulate school missions, promote an instructional climate, manage curriculum

and instruction, supervise teaching and monitor student progress (Lipsky&Gartner, 1997). They can support inclusion through (re)deploying the staff; scheduling the necessary time for educators to plan and learn new skills; involving the parents of all children in school; ensuring access to staff development, and taking time to be involved with the outcomes of all the learners in the school (Waiter-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin & Williams, 2000). Research based on a study of 32 schools in America that were implementing inclusive educational opportunities for learners, reported that among both general and special educators, the degree of administrative support emerged as the most powerful predictor of positive attitudes towards full inclusion (Lipsky& Gartner, 1997; Waiter-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin & Williams, 2000).

Danne, Beirne-Smith, Latham and Dianne (2000) wanted to investigate administrators' and teachers' perceptions of the collaborative efforts of inclusion in the elementary grades. Recent efforts have been made to try and reform education and help those children who have special needs. Educators have been moving away from segregation of students who are general education students and special needs children. This is called inclusion, where general and special children are integrated into one classroom setting. The movement of inclusion gave rise to questions about the roles of the teacher, principals and administrators in inclusion settings. Everyone wants to know what they are going to be responsible for in helping children with special needs. Researchers must analyse teachers' and building administrators' perceptions about inclusion. It is important to consider teachers' and building administrators' perceptions as these may have a great impact on the inclusion of students with disabilities.

Educators will need safe, professional environments where their attitudes and beliefs can be explored, shared, challenged and restructured (Swart, Engelbrecht, Eloff & Pettipher, 2002).

Downing (2002) maintains that the knowledge, skills and competencies required for inclusive education are substantially different and require additional training and support for educators. The competencies required to teach in an inclusive setting also involve being able to adapt curricular content and teaching methods to assist learners with special needs, working in collaboration with colleagues, parents and the broader community and being instilled with an optimistic picture of what can be accomplished (Mowes, 2002). There seems to be a lack of preparedness of educators in this regard. The role of educators in changing environments is required to also change if there is to be a smooth transition from mainstream education to language and inclusive education. Change will not be effective if those who implement it are resistant or uncommitted.

Educators need adequate support to respond to the challenges that present themselves in an inclusive class. Educators need support from their principals, col-

leagues, special educators, remedial educators, school-based and support teams. (Campher, 2003). These support structures ultimately contribute towards their preparedness for inclusive education.

Educators must see the value of the change and be prepared to change. They may need to acquire new skills and discard some of their beliefs and practices. This implies taking risks and facing challenges. Educators are required to rethink their roles, construct new knowledge and learn new skills to equip themselves for the change (Hyam, 2004).

All the authors, researchers and practitioners believed that teachers' attitudes or views have a huge impact on the progress of inclusive education for children with special needs (Levins, Bornholt, & Lennon, 2005; Leatherman & Nieyemar, 2005; Chhabra, Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010). These attitudes and views are influenced by experience and knowledge (Mahbub, 2008). From previous research it is assumed that teacher attitudes are essential for the success of language and inclusive education and the success of the integration of children with disabilities including physical, academic, behavioral and social disabilities (Levins et. al., 2005).

Materials and Methods:

The participants in this study were general educators from a private girl senior secondary school in Delhi where 25% of students belong to Economically Weaker section and few students with special needs. The medium of instruction in classroom teaching is English. Randomly teachers were selected and were asked to fill the questionnaire. In total, 24 teachers participated and average age of teachers varied around 30 years of age with majority having 0 – 5 years of experience in teaching line. All the teachers were teaching Middle school and some were also teaching High School.

The instrument used was a self- structured questionnaire developed to obtain information on support available to teachers' for pursuing inclusive education. The questionnaire (Appendix A1) was developed using a 4 point Likert-type scale (SA – Strongly Agreed, A – Agreed, D – Disagreed, SD – Strongly disagreed). Once the results came from the teachers, the information was prepared for input in order to be tabulated and analysed. In order to determine the results, they were added up and then turned into percentages. The next section will explain the participants and their responses on the inclusion questionnaire.

Results:

Below are the results summarized on various aspects in terms of school support provided to teachers? SA – Strongly agree support is available at all times; A – Agree support is available in some cases; D – Disagree support is not available in most cases; SD – Strongly Disagree support is not available at all times.

S.No	Is Below support available from School for Inclusive education	% of teachers marking SA	% of teachers marking A	% of teachers marking D	% of teachers marking SD
1	A school policy to eliminate discriminatory attitudes towards socially and economically disadvantage children and children with special needs.	67%	33%	0%	0%
2	A school based support team to assist educators to deal with children of diverse groups and of diverse needs	17%	50%	33%	0%
3	An assessment team to evaluate language problems for special teaching methods	0%	33%	67%	0%
4	Sufficient funds for resources to facilitate effective teaching of students belonging to economically weaker section and children with special needs	17%	83%	0%	0%
5	Opportunities for networking between special educators ,mainstream educators, language educators, linguistic experts , counselor and parents	17%	83%	0%	0%
6	Collaborative teaching with special educators , language educators, linguistic experts and counselor is possible	0%	83%	17%	0%
7	Colleagues are approachable for assistance when needed to teach students coming from diverse cultural groups or students with special needs.	33%	67%	0%	0%
8	Administrators are approachable when faced with challenges presented by students coming from diverse cultural groups or students with special needs	0%	100%	0%	0%
9	In-service training opportunities for mainstream educators to better cope with students of diverse needs.	0%	50%	50%	0%
10	Encouraged by my administrators to attend conferences/workshops on teaching students with diverse backgrounds and of diverse needs.	0%	67%	33%	0%

For example, Point 9 states that there is a mixed opinion among teachers in terms of in-service training opportunities provided to educators to better cope with students of diverse needs.

Discussion:

The purpose of this investigation was to figure out if as part of inclusive education, teachers get strong support from the school and the environment under which they operate. In most cases, school provided support to teachers however there are few cases where support is not suffi-

cient and teachers disagree with the quantum of support provided. There are a number of reasons why inclusion is not always supported. There is inadequate focus on language problems to be addressed for inclusive education and training opportunities for teachers. All students should simply be included, by right, in the opportunities and responsibilities of public schooling. In conclusion, the data from these surveys indicate that educators need opportunities to collaborate on inclusive programs in their schools. Hence our original hypothesis is true. Teacher's need adequate training for working with those who have special needs, how to plan and evaluate language problems of the children. All educators

need to be involved in planning and implementing adequate strategies to help children so as to build egalitarian society.

Conclusions:

The main recommendations are around support for teacher from school in two broad areas:

(1) Motivation

Based on the literature study as well as the empirical survey the researcher has reason to motivate for improved support for educators in terms of preparing them for the change from mainstream education to inclusive education. The degree of support the educator receives is the most powerful predictor of positive attitudes towards inclusion.

If educators are not adequately supported, they:

- become demotivated;
- become unsure; and
- become negative towards change.

The following recommendations are made with regard to support for educators:

- There should be smaller classes in schools. The educator-learner ratio in a school should ideally be 1:30. This can be achieved by increasing the post provisioning norm in a school, thus increasing the number of educators in a school.

- School principals should organize and (re)deploy staff effectively, and schedule the time necessary for educators to plan and learn new skills.

- The school environment should be one of collaboration where individuals are committed to working together.

- The principal's leadership style should be such that he actively embodies the democratic values of inclusive education, and supports educators by taking cognizance of their beliefs, feelings and perceptions.

- The curriculum should be developed to ensure that the diverse needs of the population are met.
- A school-based support team should be formed, made up of learners, their parents, educators, linguistic experts and representatives from the community, NGO'S and neighbouring schools. This team could assist educators in the following ways

- ✓ Meet on a weekly basis with educators who request support.

- ✓ Promote collaboration actively.

- ✓ Deal with one case per meeting.

- ✓ Keep confidential notes about cases.

(2) In-service training of educators

It is clear from the findings that the training of educators will need to change in order to make inclusive education a reality. Educators were of the opinion that they have limited knowledge of language and inclusive education. Their lack of knowledge and skills lead to negative attitudes and a misconception concerning inclusive education. The schools' management has to create a school environment that is conducive for language and inclusive education by creating opportunities for in-service training.

An in-service programme should aim at promoting successful collaboration and include in its design the active participation of various role players, time provision to accommodate collaboration, the consideration of emotional (attitudes), cognitive (knowledge and skills), interpersonal (support and help) and educational needs of educators in times of change, and the training of educators in communication (language), consulting, joint planning, team teaching, problem solving, conflict control and leadership skills.

To promote the school as a learning community, professional development should be an ongoing, coherent and rigorous process. It should enable educators to become lifelong learners, through high quality, needs driven, research-based, in-service support programmes. Staff development should not only affect knowledge, attitudes and practices of educators and administrators, but must also alter the cultures and structures of the organisation (Campher, 2003).

Some important aspects in the training of educators must include the following:

- They should be instilled with an understanding that they are responsible for all learners regardless of their abilities.
- They should be able to identify and assess barriers to learning especially due to language.
- They should be aware of how to make classroom and curricular adaptations as well as changes in their teaching methods to diverse needs of learners

- They should be prepared and trained in co-operative approaches to meet the needs of learners. These could involve learner tutors, linguistic experts, family members or others.

- They should be familiar with community and government agencies which can provide assistance to families and individuals.

- They should be instilled with positive attitudes towards these learners.

An in-service training programme should involve the following aspects:

- Coaching.
- Collaborative problem solving.
- In-service education.
- Demonstration of methods and materials.
- Case study discussion.
- Guest speakers.
- Conferences.
- Newsletters.
- Co-teaching which includes:

- ✓ Parallel teaching

- ✓ Alternate teaching

The central focus of this study was access to support structures available to educators so as to ensure successful language inclusion in mainstream classes. It is hoped that this study will be of value to all stakeholders in education and that recommendations made concerning training and the improvement of educator support structures will enhance the successful implementation language and inclusive education.

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